

The stone in front of Jesus’ tomb was very large. In the original language, the word for large is ‘mega,’ and the description of the stone is not just ‘mega,’ but ‘very mega.’ So imagine the sound when it got rolling down the track and then slammed to a stop in front of the tomb’s opening. With something that heavy, there’s just a dead-weight THUD that you feel as much as you hear. When that stone went THUD it was there to stay. Or so it seemed.

Now if you’re like me, you imagined that scene from the outside. But imagine what it was like from the inside. You’d hear the stone grinding against the face of the hill and its rocks. Slowly the entrance disappears. Then comes the THUD. Pitch darkness in the tomb. Silence surrounds you. Life is over, with all its enjoyable moments.

One such enjoyable moment was when Jesus ate a meal with his disciples. Imagine the laughter, the camaraderie, the chatter around the table. The sounds of food being dished out on plates, utensils being used, and set down, glasses being filled. The sounds of eating together and talking with Jesus had to be some of the more comfortable sounds associated with him.

But all that came to an end with a THUD. The stone slams the tomb shut. Everything stops. His disciples run for their lives. Two men, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, have risked their reputations to bury Jesus. Some women watched it all unfold, and they know: Jesus’ body is covered in darkness and surrounded in silence. He’s dead. The THUD was a sickening exclamation point.

Very early on Sunday, there’s the sound of feet approaching the tomb and hushed conversation. Women have brought spices. They want to treat Jesus’ body with them to cover the odor of death. The whispering becomes a bit more pronounced as they realize they have no plan to deal with the stone. But when they get there, to the stunned silence of everyone, it’s taken care of. The stone has been pushed away. It presumably rumbled back up the track it was sitting in.

The women are amazed and afraid. An angel is there, waiting for them. Imagine it: they hear the voice of an angel of God, telling them that Jesus is risen. His body is not there, because He has gotten up and is going to meet his disciples, just as he predicted. The women hear words that will echo in their souls for the rest of their lives: He is risen. You will see Him. It’s just like he told you.”

Can you hear it? The sound it makes? Each load of dirt goes THUD, THUD, THUD. Then when the grave is filled up and the dirt patted down, there comes a stone. Some markers are big, others are small, but you know what sound it makes as its put in front of the grave. THUD. Then everyone leaves. It’s just silence. Darkness surrounding a body.

Grief is so painful. Someone sits down to eat at the table, and an empty chair stares back. No sounds of laughter. The plate is in the cupboard. The utensils sit quietly in the drawer. The glass is on the shelf. Someone is missing. A voice has disappeared. Whose gravestone is it? Someone you love? Your own? That stone looms large—too large for us to do anything about.

But not for Jesus. The “very mega” stone could not keep him in the tomb. He’s alive! The day will come when He will return in power. The silence will be shattered, the darkness undone, He will come to your grave and the graves of all who have followed him. The gravestone? A tiny crumb. Flick. Away it goes. Same for the dirt. And out we come. Bodies alive once again. Hands and feet that will hug and dance. Eyes to see the beauty of God’s new creation. Ears to hear music that will make our Easter singing seem like a whisper by comparison.

We’ll be surrounded by those who love Jesus—we’ll be laughing and talking—it’ll be a noisy celebration. All because Jesus is larger than the very mega stone. When you hear the message “He is risen,” and when you take that message to heart, it changes the way you hear everything. Even the smallest sounds are louder than the THUD of a stone.

Listen to the water being used to baptize a child. No stone is large enough to stop Jesus from claiming that child as his own, just as he did for you when you were baptized.

Listen to the lids being opened for the Lord’s Supper. No stone can stop Jesus from coming in this meal to give life and reconciliation and forgiveness.

Listen to the pages of a Bible being turned. No stone can stop the voice of Our Shepherd from reaching our ears; His words always accomplish a purpose that he has in mind.

Listen to the joyful music today, the psalms, the hymns the spiritual songs. No stone can stop those who love Jesus from singing his praise.

Listen to the prayers. No stone can stop Jesus from comforting us in our times of trouble, or from celebrating with us in our times of great blessing.

Listen to the laughter, the conversation, the tears, as we come together on this very holy, special day. No stone can stop Jesus from creating community right here in this church.

Listen to the announcement: Jesus is risen! It’s everything. It’s the air we breathe; the ground on which we stand; the music that gives joy to life. Now it sounds like Easter.